TL 7402

# TRANSLATION OF SECTIONS OF INTERVIEW WITH NEW GOVERNOR OF EAST TIMOR

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He's been named 'The Red and White Governor'. Both his political background - he's one of the founders of Apodeti (1974), the party which since its beginning chose integration of East Timor with Indonesia - and the reality of political life in East Timor since the 12 November incident, have resulted in him being judged the most appropriate candidate for the position of East Timor's 'man up front' for the period 1992-1997. The 7th of 14 children from mixed Portuguese-Manatuto parentage, he once escaped death at the hands of Fretilin.....

Not only he and his brother were opposed to the Portuguese government in East Timor. His uncle, Jose Manuel Duarte, is known as the leader of an armed uprising against Portugal which took place in 1959. However, the uprising was a failure and Jose was exiled to Angola.....

Abilio is indeed known to be close to Jakarta. For that reason, it is anticipated that during his term as Governor, the man from Manatuto will cleanse the government apparatus of all those with 'two faces'. 'In the village of my birth, I was a cattle herder. As Governor, I intend to be a good shepherd of my people. I will embrace those members of Fretilin who repent', says the son of a teacher and a livestock farmer whose formal education went only as far as Junior High School.....

FK: What percentage of the people agree with integration?

A: A pessimistic estimate would be 90% and an optimistic one would be 95%. .....

FK: Precisely how many soldiers are needed in East Timor?

A: At the moment there are around 10 battalions for all of the development activities whilst there are 2 combat battalions (there are around 500-1000 men per battalion). There are about 8 battalions involved in territorial operations (Opster). I'm still in great need of the territorial operations forces.

FK: But these Opster forces are armed. Doesn't this affect the people's psychology?

A: Yes, of course, they're soldiers. If they weren't armed, they wouldn't be soldiers, would they? .....

FK: Wouldn't it create a better impression if they were seen to come bearing hoes instead of weapons?

A: In the field they certainly carry hoes. But even so, people criticise them, asking why are the soldiers doing that work? This sort of criticism is heard, even though they are doing work related to the people's needs.

FK: Many people have said that almost all development efforts in East Timor have been carried out by ABRI, with the result that the people don't get the chance to.....

A: You mean Bishop Belo? What he meant was that those active in developing the territory should be the people themselves, not ABRI. But we all know that the capabilities of the people are still limited. We don't have tradespeople. I know from my experience in my regency. If I want to develop a new drinking water source, I can give the pipees directly to them (ABRI) without payment. But if I ask the people to do it, there's no certainty that they'll be able to do it. And if they can do it, they'll certainly ask for payment..... Therefore, we still need ABRI there.

FK: Why doesn't the Dili Diocese want to join the Indonesian Bishops' Conference?

A: It's fairly meaningless since every Church is independent, every bishop is independent. He must answer directly to the Pope. If the Dili Diocese now joins the Indonesian Bishops' Conference it's a fairly meaningless advance, just a formality.

FK: What's your opinion of President Suharto?

A: He is known as the Father of Development, but I feel that in the case of East Timor he sould be called 'The Father of Integration' since he was the first to accept us as part of Indonesia. This has a great deal of meaning. .....

FK: Do the people of East Timor share your opinion?

A: I once introduced a village community to the photograph of President Suharto and Mrs Tien. They accepted and respected that photo as if it were a picture of Jesus..... True.....

FK: Were you elected (to the post of Governor) because you are close to the President's family?

A: There's no connection between my appointment and my friendship with Prabowo. If it was up to Prabowo to elect the Governor, he would have chose Lopes da Cruz, a very good friend of his. He was a very good friend of Prabowo's during the war, and he's closer to him than I am.

FK: When did you last meet with Xanana?

A: On 4 December 1975. At that time I was in a Fretilin prison. I saw him from inside my cell.

FK: What's the latest on him?

A: The latest news if that he entered Dili because his representative was being detained there. But that's all hearsay. Do you want to meet him? God willing, you'll convince him to surrender. Gee, he's such a handsome man. Just like me..... ha ha ha..... He's about one year younger than me. He's really cute, a bit like Roy Marten.....

FK: Some people say that the East Timorese economy is going to ruin because of the 'Denok Hatimas' group which has a monopoly on the trade and import of certain goods.....

A: I don't think it's because of that company.

FK: There are also stories that coffee is bought from farmers there at a very low price and this is because of PT Salazar's (Denok Group) monopoly on the coffee trade.

A: What I see and hear is that the international coffee market is what is affecting the coffee industry in East Timor. We can't compete with Brazilian coffe. Prices have hit rock bottom. This is the problem. It's got nothing to do with one person or monopolies.

FK: What was the effect of the November 12 incident on the people of East Timor?

A: The population of Dili is 120,000. How many people were involved in the demonstration when that incident occurred?

FK: One thousand.....

A: One thousand. And how many died?

FK: One hundred.

A: One hundred, maybe more. Yeah, let's say it's about 200. What percentage of the people is that?

FK: But doesn't the presence of so many victims have a negative psychological impact on the people?

A: That's according to you people outside. In my opinion more should have died. Why only those 200 or so? Why didn't the whole thousand of them perish at the same time? We must view the East Timor problem realistically. Aren't we democratic enough there? Everybody wants integration, so why are these characters still creating a disturbances.

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*Translation: KS*